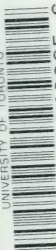


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To Margery Xmas 1923.

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Gipsy-Night
& other Poems



Pamela Bianco

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GIPSY-NIGHT
and Other Poems
by Richard Hughes



The Golden Cockerel Press
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CONTENTS

	PAGE
<i>Portrait of the Author by Pamela</i>	
<i>Bianco</i>	Frontispiece
<i>Preface</i>	11
Gipsy-Night	13
The Horse Trough	15
Martha	16
Gratitude	19
Vagrancy	21
Storm	24
Tramp	27
Epitaph	30
Glaucopis	31
Poets, Painters, Puddings	32
The Song of the Consistent Reprobate	34
Isaac Ball	35
Dirge	37
The Singing Furies	39
The Ruin	41
Judy	42
Winter	44
The Moonlit Journey	45
A Song of the Walking Road	46
The Sermon	48
The Rolling Saint	49

ERRATA

p. 19, l. 5: for *glare* read *large*.

p. 40: transpose lines 3 and 4.

Weald	52
The Jumping-Bean	54
Old Cat Care	56
Cottager is given the Bird	57
A Man	59
Dream	60
Ænigma	62
Lament for Gaza	63
The Image	64
Felo de Se	65
The Birds-nester	67

Preface

Probably the most important contribution to modern poetical theory is Mr. Robert Graves' imminent book *On English Poetry*. He grounds it upon *Man as a Neurotic Animal*. Poetry is to the poet, he argues, what dreams are to the ordinary man: a symbolical way, that is, of resolving those complexes which deadlock of emotion has produced. If this book meets with the success it deserves, it is probable that there will be a great deal of psycho-analytical criticism afloat, that the symbolic test will become the sole criterion of distinguishing the true from the fake poem; until some sort of 'Metamorphic' school arise, who defeat this by consciously faking their symbolism. I do not wish to oppose this thesis, but only to suggest that though true, it is only a partial truth: and that to make it the sole criterion of poetry would be damning: that as well as being a neurotic animal, *Man is a Communicative Animal, and a Pattern-making Animal*: that poetry cannot be traced simply to a sort of automatic psycho-therapy, but that these and many other causes are co-responsible. Indeed, though many of these poems may still prove poems within the meaning of Mr. Graves' Act, I should be sorry that they should be read with no other purpose than indecently to detect my neuroses. R.H.

North Wales, 1922

Gipsy-Night

WHEN the feet of the rain tread a dance on the
 roofs,
And the wind slides through the rocks and the trees,
And Dobbin has stabled his hoofs
In the warm bracken-litter, noisy about his knees;
And when there is no moon, and the sodden clouds slip
 over;
Whenever there is no moon, and the rain drips cold,
And folk with a shilling of money are bedded in
 houses,
And pools of water glitter on Farmer's mould;
 Then pity Sally's girls, with the rain in their blouses:
 Martha and Johnnie, who have no money:
 The small naked puppies who whimper against the
 bitches,
 The small sopping children who creep to the ditches.

But when the moon is run like a red fox
Cover to cover behind the skies;
And the breezes crack in the trees on the rocks,
Or stoop to flutter about the eyes
Of one who dreams in the scent of pines
At ease:

Then would you not go foot it with Sarah's Girls
In and out the trees?
Or listen across the fire
To old Tinker-Johnnie, and Martha his Rawnee,
In jagged Wales, or in orchard Worcestershire?

The Horse Trough

CLOUDS of children round the trough
Splash and clatter in the sun:
Their clouted shoes are mostly off,
And some are quarrelling, and one
Cools half her face, nose downward bubbling,
Wetting her clo'es and never troubling;
Bobble, bobble, bobble there
Till bubbles like young earthquakes heave
The orange island of her hair,
And tidal waves run up her sleeve;
Another's tanned as brown as bistre;
Another ducks his little sister,
And all are mixed in such a crowd
And tell their separate joys so loud
That who can be this silent one,
This dimpled, pensive, baby one?
—She sits the sunny steps so still
For hours, trying hard to kill
One fly at least of those that buzz
So cannily

And then she does.

Martha

(Gipsies on Tilberstowe: 1917)

SMALL child with the pinched face,
Why do you stare
With screwed-up eyes under a shock
Of dull carrot hair?
—Child in the long, torn frock,
Crouched in the warm dust:
Why do you stare, as if
Stare you must?

Fairies in gossamer,
Hero and warrior,
Queens in their cherry gowns,
Wizards and witches:
Dream you of such as these?
Palaces? Orange-trees?
Dream you of swords and crowns,
Child of the ditches?

*Still in the warm dust
Sits she and stares; as if
Stare she must,*

*Pale eyes that see through:
Soon I must stare too:*

Soon through the fierce glare
Loom things that are not there:
Out of the blind Past
Savages grim:
Negroes and muleteers,
Saxons and wanderers
Tall as a ship's mast,
Spectral and dim.

*Stirring the race's dust,
Stares she as stare she must.*

*Fade they: but still the glare
Shimmers her copper hair.*

Eight years of penury,
Whining and beggary,
Famine and cursing,
Hunger and sharp theft:
Death comes to such as these
Under the sobbing trees:
The cold stars nursing
Those that are left.

*Angel and devil peers
Through those pale eyes of hers,*

Child of the Wide Earth,
Born at the World's birth,
Grave with the World's pain,
Mirthless and tearless:
Widowed from babyhood,
Child without childhood,
Stained with an earthy stain,
Loveless and fearless:

My God is overhead:
Yours must be cold. Or dead.

—Child with the pinched face
Why do you stare
With so much knowledge under your shock
Of wild matted hair?

Gratitude

*E*TERNAL gratitude—a long, thin word:
When meant, oftenest left unheard:
When light on the tongue, light in the purse too;
Of curious metallurgy: when coined true
It glitters not, is neither glare nor small:
More worth than rubies—less, times, than a ball.
Not gift, nor willed: yet through its wide range
Buys what it buys exact, and leaves no change.

Old Gurney had it, won on a hot day
With ale, from glib-voiced Gypsy by the way.
He held it lightly: for 'twas a rum start
To find a hedgeling who had still a heart:
So put it down for twist of a beggar's tongue . . .
He had not felt the heat: how the dust stung
A face June-roasted: *he* saw not the look
Aslant the gift-mug; how the hand shook . . .
Yet the words filled his head, and he grew merry
And whistled from the Boar to Wrye-brook ferry,
And chaffed with Ferryman when the hawser creaked,
Or slipping bilge showed where the planks leaked;
—Lent hand himself, till doubly hard the barge
Butted its nose in mud of the farther marge.
When Gurney leapt to shore, he found—dismay!
He had no tuppence—(Tuppence was to pay

To sulky Ferryman.)—'Naught have I,' says he,
'Naught but the gratitude of Tamma Lee
Given one hour.'—Sulky Charon grinned:
'Done,' said he, 'done: I take it—all of it, mind.'
'Done,' cries Jan Gurney. Down the road he went,
But by the ford left all his merriment.

This is the tale of midday chaffering:
How Charon took, and Gurney lost the thing:
How Ferryman gave it for his youngest daughter
To a tall lad who saved her out of the water—
(Being old and mean, had none of his own to give,
So passed on Tamma's, glad to see her live):
How the young Farmer paid his quarter's rent
With that one coin, when all else was spent,
And how Squire kept it for some goldless debt. . .
For aught I know, it wanders current yet.

But Tamma was no angel in disguise:
He stole Squire's chickens—often: he told lies,
Robbed Charon's garden, burnt young Farmer's ricks
And played the village many lousy tricks.

No children sniffled, and no dog cried,
When full of oaths and smells, he died.

Vagrancy

WHEN the slow year creeps hay-ward, and the skies
Are warming in the summer's mild surprise,
And the still breeze disturbs each leafy frond
Like hungry fishes dimpling in a pond,
It is a pleasant thing to dream at ease
On sun-warmed thyme, not far from beechen trees.

A robin flashing in a rowan-tree,
A wanton robin, spills his melody
As if he had such store of golden tones
That they were no more worth to him than stones:
The sunny lizards dream upon the ledges:
Linnets titter in and out the hedges,
Or swoop among the freckled butterflies.

Down to a beechen hollow winds the track
And tunnels past my twilit bivouac:
Two spiring wisps of smoke go singly up
And scarcely tremble in the leafy air.

—There are more shadows in this loamy cup
Than God could count: and oh, but it is fair:
The kindly green and rounded trunks, that meet
Under the soil with twinings of their feet
And in the sky with twinings of their arms:

The yellow stools: the still ungathered charms
Of berry, woodland herb, and bryony,
And mid-wood's changeling child, Anemone.

Quiet as a grave beneath a spire
I lie and watch the pointed climbing fire,
I lie and watch the smoky weather-cock
That climbs too high, and bends to the breeze's shock,
And breaks, and dances off across the skies
Gay as a flurry of blue butterflies.

But presently the evening shadows in,
Heralded by the night-jar's solitary din
And the quick bat's squeak among the trees;
—Who sudden rises, darting across the air
To weave her filmy web in the Sun's bright hair
That slowly sinks dejected on his knees. . . .

Now is he vanished: the bewildered skies
Flame out a desperate and last surmise;
Then yield to Night, their sudden conqueror.

From pole to pole the shadow of the world
Creeps over heaven, till itself is lit
By the very many stars that wake in it:

Sleep, like a messenger of great import,
Lays quiet and compelling hands athwart
The easy idlenesses of my mind.
—There is a breeze above me, and around:
There is a fire before me, and behind:
But Sleep doth hold me, and I hear no sound.

In the far West the clouds are mustering,
Without hurry, noise, or blustering:
And soon as Body's nightly Sentinel
Himself doth nod, I open furtive eyes . . .

With darkling hook the Farmer of the Skies
Goes reaping stars: they flicker, one by one,
Nodding a little; tumble,—and are gone.

Storm: to the Theme of Polyphemus

MORTAL I stand upon the lifeless hills
That jut their craggèd bones against the sky:
I crawl upon their naked ebony,
And toil across the scars of Titan ills
Dealt by the weaponing of gods and devils:
I climb their uppermost deserted levels,
And see how Heaven glowers his one eye
Blood-red and black-browed in the sullen sky,
While all his face is livid as a corpse
And wicked as a snake's: see how he warps
His sultry beam across the misted sea,
As if he grudged its darkling ministry.

He looks so covetous, I think he hides
—Jetsam of the slow ethereal tides—
Some cursed and battered Sailor of the Spheres:
All night he ravens on him and his peers,
But with the day he straddles monstrously
Across the earth in churlish shepherdry,
A-hungered for his hideous nightly feast.

But storms are gathering in the whitened East:
The day grows darker still, and suddenly
That lone and crafty Prisoner of the Sky
Plunges his murky torch in Heaven's Eye:

The blinded, screaming tempest trumpets out
His windy agonies: Oh, he will spout
His boiling rains upon the soggy air
And heave great rocking planets: he will tear
And snatch the screeching comets by the hair
To fling them all about him in the sea,
And blast the wretch's fatal Odyssey!

The great convulsions of the Deity
Rumble in agony across the sky:
His thunders rattle in and out the peaks:
His lightnings jab at every word He speaks:
—At every heavenly curse the cloud is split
And daggered lightnings crackle out of it.

Like a steep shower of snakes the hissing rain
Flickers its tongues upon the muddied plain,
Writhing and twisting on the gutted rocks
That tremble at the heavy thunder-shocks:
Soon from the hub on Heaven's axel-tree
The frozen hail flies spinning, and the sea
Is lashed beneath me to a howling smoke
As if the frozen fires of hell had woke
And cracked their icy flames in the face of Heaven.

Withered and crouching and scarce breathing even,
And battered as a gnat upon a wall

I cling and gasp—climb to my feet, and fall,
And crawl at last beneath a lidded stone,
Careless if all the earth's foundations groan
And strain in the heaving of this devilry,
Careless at last whether I live or die.

So the vast Æschylean tragedy
Rolls to its thunderous appointed close:
With final mutterings each actor goes:
And the huge Heavenly tragedian
Tears from his face the massy mask and wan,
And shines resplendent on the shattered stage
As he has done from age to bewildered age,
Giving the lie to all his mimic rage.

Tramp

(The Bath Road, June.)

WHEN a brass sun staggers above the sky,
When feet cleave to boots, and the tongue's dry,
And sharp dust goads the rolling eye,
Come thoughts of wine, and dancing thoughts of girls:
They shiver their white arms, and the head whirls,
And noon light is hid in their dark curls:
Noon feet stumble and head swims.
Out shines the sun, and the thought dims,
And death, for blood, runs in the weak limbs.

To fall on flints in the shade of tall nettles
Gives easy sleep as a bed of rose petals,
And dust drifting from the highway
As light a coverlet as down may.
The myriad feet of many-sized flies
May not open those tired eyes.

The first wind of night
Twitches the coverlet away quite:
The first wind and large first rain
Flickers the dry pulse to life again.
Flickers the lids burning on the eyes:
Come sudden flashes of the slipping skies:

Hunger, oldest visionary,
Hides a devil in a tree,
Hints a glory in the clouds,
Fills the crooked air with crowds
Of ivory sightless demons singing—
Eyes start: straightens back:
Limbs stagger and crack:
But brain flies, brain soars
Up, where the Sky roars
Upon the back of cherubim:
Brain rockets up to Him.
Body gives another twist
To the slack waist-band;
In agony clenches fist
Till the nails bite the hand.
Body floats light as air,
With rain in its sparse hair.

Brain returns, and would tell
The things he has seen well:

Body will not stir his lips:
Mind and Body come to grips.

Deadly each hates the other
As treacherous blood-brother.

No sight, no sound shows
How the struggle goes.

I sink at last faint in the wet gutter;
So many words to sing that the tongue cannot utter.

Epitaph

JONATHAN Barlow loved wet skies,
And golden leaves on a rollick wind . . .
The clouds drip damp on his crumbled eyes,
And the storm his roystering dirge hath dinned.

Proud buck rabbits he loved, and the feel
Of a finicky nose that sniffed his hand:
So now they burrow, and crop their meal;
Their fore-paws scatter him up in sand.

He loved old bracken, and now it pushes
Affectionate roots between his bones:
He runs in the sap of the young spring bushes,
—Basks, when a June sun warms the stones.

Jonathan Barlow loved his Connie
Better than beasts, or trees, or rain . . .
But her ears are shut to her Golden-Jonnie,
And his tap, tap, tap, at her window-pane.

Glaucopis

JOHN Fane Dingle
By Rumney Brook
Shot a crop-eared owl,
For pigeon mistook:

Caught her by the lax wing.
—She, as she dies,
Thrills his warm soul through
With her deep eyes.

Corpse-eyes are eerie:
Tiger-eyes fierce:
John Fane Dingle found
Owl-eyes worse.

Owl-eyes on night-clouds,
Constant as Fate:
Owl-eyes in baby's face:
On dish and plate:

Owl-eyes, without sound.
—Pale of hue
John died of no complaint,
With owl-eyes too.

Poets, Painters, Puddings

POETS, painters, and puddings; these three
Make up the World as it ought to be.

Poets make faces
And sudden grimaces:
They twit you, and spit you
On words: then admit you
To heaven or hell
By the tales that they tell.

Painters are gay
As young rabbits in May:
They buy jolly mugs,
Bowls, pictures, and jugs:
The things round their necks
Are lively with checks,
(For they like something red
As a frame for the head):
Or they'll curse you with oaths,
That tear holes in your clothes.
(With nothing to mend them
You'd best not offend them.)

Puddings should be
Full of currants, for me:

Boiled in a pail,
Tied in the tail
Of an old bleached shirt:
So hot that they hurt,
So huge that they last
From the dim, distant past
Until the crack o' doom
Lift the roof off the room.

Poets, painters, and puddings; these three
Crown the day as it crowned should be.

The Song of the Consistent Reprobate

I F my lady goes to heaven,
I (Where all lovely ladies go,)
To the harps and zither-playing
And the psalms I do not know,
I must leave my whisky-drinking,
All the vain world's jolly show:
If my lady goes to heaven,
Where my lady leads, I go!

I've no taste to flaunt through heaven
Crowing over friend or foe
That have gone some other-whither,
—Jolly lads I used to know:
How could I set tongue to anthem
Jake not there, nor Charles: yet—oh,
If my lady goes to heaven,
If she goes, I too must go!

I'd not mind the toil and sorrow,
Due to such as heavenward go,
Days of fasting, nights of weeping,
Lady, for I love you so:
If the crown is worth attaining
Only such as you can know.
Lady, must I go to heaven?
Gentle lady, must I go?

Isaac Ball

PAINTING pictures
Worth nothing at all
In a dark cellar
Sits Isaac Ball.

Cobwebs on his butter,
Herrings in bed:
Stout matted in the hair
Of his poor cracked head.

There he paints Men's Thoughts
—Or so says he:
For in that cellar
It's too dark to see.

Isaac knew great men,
Poets and peers:
Treated crown-princes
To stouts and beers;

Some still visit him ;
Pretend to buy
His unpainted pictures—
The Lord knows why.

His grey beard is woolly,
Eyes brown and wild :
Sticky things in his pocket
For anybody's child.

Someday he'll win fame,
—So Isaac boasts,
Lecturing half the night
To long-legged ghosts.

Isaac was young once :
At sixty-five
Still seduces more girls
Than any man alive.

Dirge

TO those under smoke-blackened tiles, and cavernous
echoing arches,

In tortuous hid courts, where the roar never ceases
Of deep cobbled streets wherein dray upon dray ever
marches,

The sky is a broken lid, a litter of smashed yellow
pieces.

To those under mouldering roofs, where life to an hour
is crowded,

Life, to a span of the floor, to an inch of the light,
And night is all fevrous-hot, a time to be bawded and
rowdied,

Day is a time of grinding, that looks for rest to the
night.

Those who would live, do it quickly, with quick tears,
sudden laughter,

Quick oaths—terse blasphemous thoughts about God
the Creator:

Those who would die, do it quickly, with noose from
the rafter,

Or the black shadowy eddies of Thames, the hurry-
nater.

Life is the Master, the keen and grim destroyer of
beauty:

Death is a quiet and deep reliever, where soul upon soul
And wizened and thwarted body on body are loosed
from their duty

Of living, and sink in a bottomless, edgeless impalpable
hole.

Dead, they can see far above them, as if from the depth
of a pit,

Black on the glare small figures that twist and are shriv-
elled in it.

The Singing Furies

THE yellow sky grows vivid as the sun :
The sea glittering, and the hills dun.

The stones quiver. Twenty pounds of lead
Fold upon fold, the air laps my head.

Both eyes scorch : tongue stiff and bitter :
Flies buzz, but no birds twitter :
Slow bullocks stand with stinging feet,
And naked fishes scarcely stir for heat.

White as smoke,
As jetted stream, dead clouds awoke
And quivered on the Western rim.
Then the singing started : dim
And sibilant as rime-stiff reeds
That whistle as the wind leads.
The North answered, low and clear ;
The South whispered hard and sere,
And thunder muffled up like drums
Beat, whence the East wind comes.
The heavy sky that could not weep
Is loosened : rain falls steep :
And thirty singing furies ride
To split the sky from side to side.

They sing, and lash the wet-flanked wind:
Sing, from Col to Hafod Mynd
Of miles along the mounded shore:
And fling their voices half a score
Whip loud music from a tree,
And roll their pæan out to sea
Where crowded breakers fling and leap,
And strange things throb five fathoms deep.

The sudden tempest roared and died:
The singing furies muted ride
Down wet and slippery roads to hell:
And, silent in their captors' train
Two fishers, storm-caught on the main;
A shepherd, battered with his flocks;
A pit-boy tumbled from the rocks;
A dozen back-broke gulls, and hosts
Of shadowy, small, pathetic ghosts,
—Of mice and leverets caught by flood;
Their beauty shrouded in cold mud.

The Ruin

GONE are the coloured princes, gone echo, gone
laughter:
Drips the blank roof: and the moss creeps after.

Dead is the crumbled chimney: all mellowed to rotting
The wall-tints, and the floor-tints, from the spotting
Of the rain, from the wind and slow appetite
Of patient mould: and of the worms that bite
At beauty all their innumerable lives.

—But the sudden nip of knives,
The lady aching for her stiffening lord,
The passionate-fearful bride
And beaded pallor clamped to the torment-board,
—Leave they no ghosts, no memories by the stairs?
No sheeted glimmer treading floorless ways?
No haunting melody of lovers' airs,
Nor stealthy chill upon the noon of days?

No: for the dead and senseless walls have long forgotten
What passionate hearts beneath the grass lie rotten.

Only from roofs and chimneys pleasantly sliding
Tumbles the rain in the early hours:
Patters its thousand feet on the flowers,
Cools its small grey feet in the grasses.

Judy

SAND hot to haunches:
Sun beating eyes down,
Yet they peer under lashes
At the hill's crown:

See how the hill slants
Up the sky half way;
Over the top tall clouds
Poke, gold and grey.

Down: see a green field
Tipped on its short edge,
Its upper rim straggled round
By a black hedge.

Grass bright as new brass:
Uneven dark gorse
Stuck to its own shadow,
Like Judy that black horse.

Birds clatter numberless,
And the breeze tells
That bean-flower somewhere
Has ousted the blue-bells:

Birds clatter numberless:
In the muffled wood
Big feet move slowly:
Mean no good.

Winter

SNOW wind-whipt to ice
Under a hard sun:
Stream-runnels curdled hoar
Crackle, cannot run.

Robin stark dead on twig,
Song stiffened in it:
Fluffed feathers may not warm
Bone-thin linnet:

Big-eyed rabbit, lost,
Scrabbles the snow,
Searching for long-dead grass
With frost-bit toe:

Mad-tired on the road
Old Kelly goes;
Through crookt fingers snuffs the air
Knife-cold in his nose.

Hunger-weak, snow-dazzled,
Old Thomas Kelly
Thrusts his bit hands, for warmth
'Twixt waistcoat and belly.

The Moonlit Journey

UNGUARDED stands the shuttered sky:
The creeping Thief of Night
With tool and hook begins to ply
His careful picking: he would pry
And filch her coffered light.
The soundless tapping of his bar
Pricks out each sudden star.

The soundless tapping of his bar
Lets out the wealthy Moon:
The frozen Bright goes arching far
On buttresses of lucid spar
And lights the road to Cloun;
And all the pouring of her riches
Floats on the silent ditches.

The crescent road is ivory
Between the silver water:
But squat and black and creeping, see,
Blank as the shadow of a tree,
Old Robert and his daughter
Toil on: and fearful, each descries
Moon-gleams in other's eyes.

A Song of the Walking Road

THE World is all orange-round:
The sea smells salt between:
The strong hills climb on their own backs,
Coloured and damascene,
Cloud-flecked and sunny-green;
Knotted and straining up,
Up, with still hands and cold:
Grip at the slipping sky,
Yet cannot hold:
Round twists old Earth, and round. . .
Stillness not yet found.

Plains like a flat dish, too,
Shudder and spin:
Roads in a pattern crawl
Scratched with a pin
Across the fields' dim shagreen:
—Dusty their load:
But over the craggy hills
Wanders the Walking Road!

Broad as the hill's broad,
Rough as the world's rough, too:
Long as the Age is long,
Ancient and true,

Swinging, and broad, and long:
—Craggy, strong.

Gods sit like milestones
On the edge of the Road, by the Moon's sill;
Man has feet, feet that swing, pound the high hill
Above and above, until
He stumble and widely spill
His dusty bones.

Round twists old Earth, and round. . .
Stillness not yet found.

The Sermon

(Wales, 1920)

LIKE gript stick
Still I sit:
Eyes fixed on far small eyes,
Full of it:
On the old, broad face,
The hung chin;
Heavy arms, surplice
Worn through and worn thin.
Probe I the hid mind
Under the gross flesh:
Clutch at poetic words,
Follow their mesh
Scarce heaving breath.
Clutch, marvel, wonder,
Till the words end.

Stilled is the muttered thunder:
The hard, few people wake,
Gather their books and go. . .
—Whether their hearts could break
How can I know?

The Rolling Saint

UNDER the crags of Teiriwch,
The door-sills of the Sun,
Where God has left the bony earth
Just as it was begun;
Where clouds sail past like argosies
Breasting the crested hills
With mainsail and foretopsail
That the thin breeze fills;
With ballast of round thunder,
And anchored with the rain;
With a long shadow sounding
The deep, far plain:
Where rocks are broken playthings
By petulant gods hurled,
And Heaven sits a-straddle
The roof-ridge of the World:
—Under the crags of Teiriwch
Is a round pile of stones,
Large stones, small stones,
—White as old bones;
Some from high places
Or from the lake's shore;
And every man that passes
Adds one more—

The years it has been growing
Verge on a hundred score.

For in the Cave of Teiriwch
That scarce holds a sheep,
Where plovers and rock-conies
And wild things sleep,
A woman lived for ninety years
On bilberries and moss
And lizards and small creeping things,
And carved herself a cross:
But wild hill robbers
Found the ancient saint
And dragged her to the sunlight,
Making no complaint.
Too old was she for weeping,
Too shrivelled and too dry:
She crouched and mumle-mumled
And mumled to the sky.
No breath had she for wailing,
Her cheeks were paper-thin:
She was, for all her holiness,
As ugly as sin.

They cramped her in a barrel
—All but her bobbing head

—And rolled her down from Teiriwch
Until she was dead:
They took her out, and buried her
—Just broken bits of bone
And rags and skin, and over her
Set one small stone:
But if you pass her sepulchre
And add not one thereto
The ghost of that old murdered Saint
Will roll in front of you
The whole night through.

The clouds sail past in argosies
And cold drips the rain:
The whole world is far and high
Above the tilted plain.
The silent mists float eerily,
And I am here alone.

Weald

STILL is the leaden night:
The film-eyed moon
Spills hardly any light,
But nods to sleep—And soon
Through five broad parishes there is no sound
But the far melancholy wooing
Of evil-minded cats; and the late shoeing
Of some unlucky filly by the ford.

For twenty miles abroad there is no moving,
But for the uncomfortable hooving
Of midnight cows a-row in Parson's Lag:
—That; and the slow twist of water round a snag.

The silver mist that slumbers in the hollow
Dreams of a breeze, and turns upon its side,
So sleep uneasy: but no breezes follow,
Only the moon blinks slowly thrice, wan-eyed.
—I think this is the most unhappy night
Since hot-cheeked Hecuba wept in the dawn.
—There never was a more unhappy night,
Not that when Hero's lamp proved unavailing,
Nor that when Bethlehem was filled with wailing. . .

. . . There is no reason for unhappiness,
Save that the saddened stars have hid their faces,
And that dun clouds usurp their brilliant places,
And that the wind lacks even strength to sigh.

And yet, as if outraged by some long tune
A dog cries dolefully, green-eyed in the moon. . .

The Jumping-Bean

(A curious bean, with a small maggot in it, who comes to life and tumbles his dwelling at the stimulus of warmth.)

SUN in a warm streak
Striping the plush:
Catch breath, hold finger tight:
All delight hush.

Dance, small grey thing
Sleek in the warm sun:
Roll around, to this, to that,
—Rare wormy fun!

Hot sun applauds thee:
Warm fingers press
To wake the small life within
Thy rotund dress.

Alack! Have years in cupboard,
In chill and dark,
Stifled thy discontent?
Snufft thy spark?

Liest thou stark, stiff,
There in thy bed?
*Weep then a dirge for him:
Poor Bean's dead!*

Old Cat Care outside the Cottage

1918.

GREEN-EYED Care
May prowl and glare
And poke his snub, be-whiskered nose:
But Door fits tight
Against the Night:
Through criss-cross cracks no evil goes.

Window is small:
No room at all
For Worry and Money, his shoulder-bones:
Chimney is wide,
But Smoke's inside
And happy Smoke would smother his moans.

Be-whiskered Care
May prowl out there:
But I never heard
He caught the Blue Bird!

Cottager is given the Bird

1921.

SIDELONG the Bird ran,
Hard-eyed on the turned mould:
Was door—window—wide?
—Then Heart grew kettle-cold.

Might no wind-suckt curtain
Dim that travelling Eye?
Could Door's thick benediction
Deafen: if he should cry?

Sidelong the Bird crept
Into the stark door:
His yellow, lidless eye!
Foot chill to the stone floor!

. . . Then Smoke, that slender baby,
To Hearth's white Niobe-breast
Sank trembling—dead. Oh Bird,
Bird, spare the rest!

He has bidden bats to flit
In Window's wide mouth:
Starlings to tumble, and mock
Poor Pot's old rusty drouth:

And a wet canker, nip
Those round-breasted stones
That I hugged to strong walls
With the love of my strained bones.

He bad lank Spider run,
Grow busy, web me out
With dusty trespass stretch
From mantel to kettle-spout.

Door, Window, Rafter, Chimney,
Grow silent, die:
All are dead: all moulder:
Sole banished mourner I.

See how the Past rustles
Stirring to life again. . .
Three whole years left I lockt
Behind that window-pane.

A Man

HE is a man in love with grass,
He shivers at a tree:
Thrill of wing in briar-bushes
Wildly at his heart pushes
Like the first, faint hint
A lover is let see.

If he had known a wordless song
As a bird he would sing;
Who took delight in slim rabbits,
Watched their delicate habits,
—Waited, by the briar-bush,
That flutter of wooing.

Why did he break that small wing?
The sun looks hollowly:
Mocking 's where the water goes;
The breeze bitter in his nose:
Mocking eyes wide burning
—Lost, lost is he!

Dream

COLD shone the moon, with noise
The night went by.
Trees uttered things of woe:
Bent grass dared not grow:

Ah desperate man with haggard eyes
And hands that fence away the skies
On rock and briar stumbling,
Is it fear of the storm's rumbling,
Of the hissing cold rain,
Or lightning's tragic pain
Drives you so madly?
See, see the patient moon;
How she her course keeps
Through cloudy shallows and across black deeps,
Now gone, now shines soon.
Where's cause for fear?

'I shudder and shudder
At her bright light:
I fear, I fear,
That she her fixt course follows
So still and white
Through deeps and shallows
With never a tremor:

Naught shall disturb her.
I fear, I fear
What they may be
That secretly bind her:
What hand holds the reins
Of those sightless forces
That govern her courses.
Is it Settebos
Who deals in her command?
Or that unseen Night-Comer
With tender curst hand?
—I shudder, and shudder.’

Poor storm-wisp, wander!
Wind shall not hurt thee,
Rain not appal thee,
Lightning not blast thee;
Thou art worn so frail
Only the moonlight pale
To an ash shall burn thee,
To an invisible Pain.

Enigma

HOW can I tell it?
I saw a thing
That I did not find strange
In my visioning.

A flawless tall mirror,
Glass dim and green;
And a tall, dim figure
There was between:

Pale, so pale her face
As veils of thin water;
And her eyes water-pale,
And the moonlight on her;

And she was dying, dying;
She combed her long hair,
And the crimson blood ran
In the fine gold there.

She was dying, dying. . .
And in her perfect eye
No terror lurked; nor pity
That she should so die.

Lament for Gaza

YOU who listen, pity
Gaza, this poor city;
For now the roof rocks,
And the blind god's hands
Grope at the pillars where he stands:
While Gaza mocks,
While Gaza mocks.

The Image

DIM the light in your faces: be passionless in the
room.

Snuffed are the tapers, and bitterly hang on the flower-
less air:

See: and this is the Image of her they will lay in the
tomb,

Clear, and waxen, and cooled in the mass of her hair.

Quiet the tears in your voices: feel lightly, finger, for
finger

In love: then see how like is the Image, but lifelessly
fashioned

And sightless, calm, unloving. . . Oh who is the Artist?
Oh linger

And ponder whither has flitted his Sitter Impassioned.

Felo de Se

IF I were stone dead and buried under,
Is there a part of me would still wander,
Shiver, mourn, and cry Alack,
With no body to its back?

When brain grew mealy, turned to dust,
Would lissom Mind, too, suffer rust?
Immortal Soul grow imbecile,
Having no brain to think and feel?

—Or grant it be as priests say,
And growth come on my death-day:
Suppose Growth came: would Certainty?
Or would Mind still a quester be,

Frame deeper mysteries, not find them out,
And wander in a larger Doubt?
—Alas! If to mind's petty stir
Death prove so poor a silencer:

Though veins when emptied a few hours
Of this hot blood, might suckle flowers:
From spiritual flames that scorch me
Never, never were I free!

Then back, Death! Till I call thee
Hast come too soon!

. . *Thou silly worm, gnaw not*
Yet thine intricate cocoon.

The Birds-nester

*A Memorial, to an Unfortunate Young Man, Expelled
from his University for a Daring Neologism.*

C RITIC, that hoary Gull, in air
Whistles, whistles shrilly:
Climbing Youth, beware
Murder and mockery!

That wheeling, hoary gull
Bats on his thin skull,
Claws at his steady eyes
Whinnies and cries:
Youth flings the gibe back.
Hundreds of wings clack,
Bright eyes encircle, search
For foothold's fatal lurch.
'See now he shifts his grip:
Loosen each finger-tip!
Whew, brothers, shall he slip?'
Crack-tendoned, answers Youth
'I seek for Eggs of Truth.'

Claws clutch his hair,
Beaks prick his eyes—
'Whistle, *Despair, Despair!*

With ancient quills prise
Every hand's—foot's—hold,
Wedge'd in the rock's fold!
Batter and scream, bewilder
This impious babel-buil. . .

whew!

Down he is rocketing falling twisting.'

For days and nights
Time's curly breakers
Winnow him, wash him. . .
What is that stirs?
What wing from the heights
Slants to that murdered limb?

Gull's peering eye hath spotted
Something the sea has rotted.
Secretly to the feast
Dives big gull, less, and least;
For Age never dies:
Age shall pick out his eyes,
Taste them with critick zest,
—Age knows the Best!
—Age shall build his lair
Out of his hair;
Gulp his small splintered bones
To his gizzard, for stones:

Feed on his words
All his young woolly birds.
Say not he died in vain!
All that he cried in pain
Ear-cocked Age hearkens to
Someday. Declares it true
Someday.

What though he fell? The jest
Feathers old Critic's nest.

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Hughes, Richard Arthur Warren
Gipsy-night, and other poems

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